

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 4832

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, OCON, AWACS, MILI, IT
SUBJECT: NATO AEW

REF: A. STATE 061945, B. STATE 064181

1. DURING MY INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI ON MARCH 23 (SEE SEPTELS) I RAISED WITH HIM THE QUESTION OF ITALIAN SUPPORT FOR AWACS AT THE MARCH 25TH DPC. IN THE PRESENT ABSENCE OF DEFMIN LATTANZIO I EXPLAINED I THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO BRING IT TO HIS ATTENTION.

2. DRAWING ON DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE AND SECDEF BROWN'S LETTER TO LATTANZIO, I EXPLAINED OUR POSITION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF AGREEMENT AT THE MARCH 25TH DPC. ANDREOTTI REPLIED THAT AS A FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE HE WAS WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE AWACS PROGRAM AND ITS PROBLEMS. HE ASSURED ME THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS IN COMPLETE ACCORD WITH THE POLITICAL, MILITARY AND TECHNICAL RATIONALE FOR THE SYSTEM. THE ONLY PROBLEM ITALY HAS WAS FINANCIAL. THERE WAS SIMPLY NO MONEY. HE HAD HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY IN SHEPHERDING THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S ARMY, NAVY AND
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AIR FORCE PROMOTIONAL LAWS THROUGH THE PARLIAMENT. WITH THE CURRENT AUSTERITY PROGRAM IN PROGRESS THERE WAS LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PARLIAMENT WOULD AGREE TO FURTHER APPROPRIATIONS FOR DEFENSE. INDEED, HE FEARED THAT THE LEFT IN THE PARLIAMENT WOULD USE ANY REQUEST FOR FURTHER DEFENSE MONIES AS A PRETEXT TO CUT BACK MILITARY APPROPRIATIONS. IF IT WERE POSSIBLE AT THE MARCH 25

MEETING TO DECOUPLE POLITICAL APPROVAL FOR ECONOMIC COMMITMENT, ITALY COULD BE FORTHCOMING. BUT HE INSISTED, ITALY CANNOT NOW COMMIT MONEY FOR AWACS NOR WILL IT BE ABLE TO DO SO FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

3. I CONCLUDED OUR MEETING EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT AS A MEMBER OF "THE INNER CIRCLE" ITALY COULD FIND WAYS TO MEET THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT COME WITH PLAYING THE ROLE OF A MAJOR PARTNER.GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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